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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6739
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3415
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4899
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2504
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3784
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001178

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: POLICE ILL-PREPARED IN WESTERN NEPAL

REF: KATHMANDU 741

11. SUMMARY: (SBU) Nepali Police Officers operate with obsolete equipment and are ill prepared to contribute during a national disaster or other emergency, EmbOffs found during a trip to Western Nepal. Police facilities are in a state of disrepair and officers are forced to share cramped quarters, often in huts, with dirt floors. Officers lack basic investigative equipment and rely solely on confessions or witness testimony. Officers are armed with antiquated firearms, and the majority of vehicles are inoperable. Detention facilities are overcrowded and unsanitary. End Summary.

12. (SBU) EmbOffs traveled to the Kailali, Bardiya, Banke, Dang, Kapilbasta, Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Chitawan, and Kaski districts of Western Nepal, and met with senior police officers and community leaders. The trip included visits to over 18 different police facilities to include district police offices, traffic police offices, border police posts, and community centers. The police facilities were dilapidated, faced a shortage of equipment, and contained rudimentary facilities. Some of the police facilities also contained temporary detention facilities. All of the detention facilities were overflowing, some to the extent that detainees were forced to lay on one another.

Low Police Salaries and Poor Standard of Living

13. (SBU) The officers reside in cramped living quarters in crumbling buildings and in some instances huts, with thatched roofs, and dirt floors. Beds consist of wooden cots, with no padding. A building suitable for ten police officers would be crammed with over 50. Washing facilities were normally outdoor, and kitchen facilities often consisted of a wooden shack. The police are armed primarily with obsolete .303 caliber British Enfields, and what little ammunition is available is corroded and unreliable. The police are unable to effectively patrol their areas of operation due to lack of vehicles, or funds to maintain or repair the vehicles. The Kaski District police office contains 16 vehicles and has an annual budget of 50,000 Nepal Rupe (NPR), approximately USD 670.00, for fuel, maintenance, and repair. The average salary for a constable is 10,000 NPR per month, approximately USD 134.00, and fortunately some are able to receive postings to the United Nations (UN) for comparatively-lucrative peacekeeping missions. Two police inspectors remarked that many who enlist in the traffic police force do so because of

the constant exposure to the public, which equals more opportunities to receive bribes.

Crime Rate

14. (SBU) None of the sites visited reported high crime rates. Officers explained the border along Western Nepal was less used than in the East and, consequently, there were fewer cases of drug smuggling, human trafficking, or armed group activity. Drug abuse was on the rise and the most common drug involved consisted of Indian Heroine, more commonly known as "brown sugar." Due to the open border with India, small amounts of heroine are easily bought into Nepal. The amounts carried are usually less than 100 grams, which avoids the stiff penalties of possession over 100 grams. Of those arrested for drug use in the city of Pokhara, a primary tourist destination in Nepal, all were locals.

Appalling Detention Facilities

15. (SBU) In most cases, detention facilities were converted from office spaces by installing an iron door and placing a hole in the corner of the room for a toilet. The stench from the facilities could be smelled from several meters away. One such facility was designed to hold 60 inmates and was packed with over 200. The women were kept separated from the men and were normally detained for drugs and prostitution. The police reported few instances of human trafficking and explained that trafficking is normally a difficult crime to prosecute because of the manner in which the girls travel.

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Many are promised employment as household servants in foreign countries and sign a release waiver as a term of employment. If pressed into the sex trade, many of the victims believe the release waiver prevents them from pressing charges.

Special Security Plan/Local Peace Committees Absent

16. (SBU) None of the sites visited have received financial assistance from the Government of Nepal's Special Security Plan (SSP) (reftel). Police buildings damaged during the insurgency remained untouched. One senior officer described the SSP as nothing more than a motivational speech because it lacks both strategy or financial support. Police officers were unaware of any active Local Peace Committees and opined that money allocated for specific projects is diverted before reaching its intended destination. Police Superintendent Ramesh Khalel stated that funds never reach their proper destination due to government corruption.

Maoist Support and Young Communist League Activity

17. (SBU) Officers have not witnessed any recent increase or decrease in Maoist support. Most noted that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) cantonment camps remained quiet and aside from the occasional scuffle between the Maoist affiliated Young Communist League (YCL) and the United Marxist Leninist (UML) Youth Force, the YCL did not cause problems. YCL members do not advertise themselves as Maoist affiliates and the only way to differentiate them from other Maoist affiliates would be their level of fanaticism towards the Maoist Party. Only in the Chitawan District did officers mention YCL corruption of local businesses, and remarked that the YCL routinely involve themselves in official matters. Despite attempts to repeat or rephrase the question, the officers would not elaborate.

Comment

18. (SBU) The biggest issue facing the Nepal Police community in Western Nepal is not crime of armed groups, but substandard living, lack of equipment, and consequently low morale. The instability of the Nepal Government has left Senior Police Officers fearing for their careers, and the uncertainty over their future government leadership prevents

them from making key decisions. The issue of the condition of the Nepal Police Force will likely continue to be brushed aside until the government reaches some semblance of stability. In the meantime officers will remain ill prepared to face any threat, whether criminal elements or a natural disaster.

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